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GIVING MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN THE EDUCATION THEY NEED TO SUCCEED

Governor Jennifer Granholm's economic plan is built upon the central belief that Michigan cannot compete and succeed without a world class workforce. To achieve that goal, we must invest in our public education system, double the number of college graduates, and create a culture of learning that is unprecedented in Michigan's history.

Raising Expectations, Increasing Investment

In the last two years, we have taken giant steps toward the goal of strengthening Michigan's public schools. Investment in our schools is at an all-time high. At the same time, we've raised expectations...and the results are impressive.

We adopted a new standardized curriculum for grades K-8 to ensure that every student, regardless of geography, is learning the same material. With consistent expectations come consistent results. After two years of standardized instruction, the latest MEAP results, published just last month, showed significant improvement in reading and math.

We've adopted new high school standards that are among the most rigorous in the nation. And we expect the same kind of results.

The Michigan Promise, which provides every child a \$4,000 scholarship to attend college, community college, or technical training program, will make higher education a reality for more families.

The Next Steps

Now, Governor Granholm has proposed the next steps to keep the bar high and ensure that all our students have the tools they need to clear it.

- ***Investing in Education***

Governor Granholm will, once again, propose an increase in funding for Michigan's public schools. A key part of this proposal is a \$200 million initiative to begin phasing in full-day preschool for Michigan's children. The Governor's plan will provide school districts with a foundation allowance for at-risk kids enrolled in full-day preschool programs. To receive funding, school districts must offer approved curriculum that prepares students in language, early literacy, and early mathematics. The programs must also provide nutritional services, health screening, and referral services for families in need. The Governor's plan also increases funding for partial-day preschool programs. Together, these programs can serve more than 50,000 Michigan children.

- ***Mandatory Kindergarten***

Under current Michigan law, parents do not have to send their children to school until they reach the age of six. Our public schools are required to offer kindergarten for five-year-old students, but attendance is not mandatory. Every year thousands of Michigan children miss this critical learning experience. Governor Granholm is asking the state Legislature to amend state law to make kindergarten mandatory for all five-year-olds in Michigan.

- ***Raising the Dropout Age***

With the state focused on getting all young people to continue their education beyond high school, Governor Granholm believes we must raise the age of compulsory school attendance to 18. Our law making 16 the drop-out age was adopted in 1895 when most jobs did not require additional education. The Governor is urging lawmakers to support legislation on this issue offered by Senator Liz Brater (D-Ann Arbor) and Representative LaMar Lemmons (D-Detroit).

- ***Middle College High Schools***

Governor Granholm won funding in last year's budget to launch a group of middle college high schools to prepare young people for careers in the health care industry through an educational program that includes both high school and college level courses. The planning efforts to create six of these schools are underway and involve the Detroit Public Schools, the Wayne, Washtenaw, Genesee, Delta-Schoolcraft, and Clare-Gladwin intermediate school districts and health care providers and higher education institutions in their respective communities. In several of these schools, students will be able to earn both a high school degree and an associate's degree in a five-year course of study. The Governor is calling for additional state support for these pioneering schools when they open in the fall and for funding to create similar schools across the state.

- ***Making College More Affordable for Families***

Inspired by the privately initiated and financed Kalamazoo Promise, Governor Granholm is taking her quest for increased opportunity for higher education to another level. Announced in 2005, the Kalamazoo Promise guarantees students who graduate from the Kalamazoo Public Schools free tuition at any state university or community college in Michigan.

In less than two years, educators and community leaders in Kalamazoo are citing numerous indicators of the positive impact the Kalamazoo Promise has had on that community, including increased graduation rates and college enrollment. The district gained 900 new students this year, the largest enrollment increase of any district in Michigan for the 2006-2007 school year. Property values have increased by almost 10 percent in Kalamazoo, while home prices have stagnated in the surrounding area. Developers are building new housing in the city, and economic development officials say the Promise is increasing interest in the community as the site of new business investment.

Governor Granholm is asking the Legislature to create "Promise" zones in cities with a combination of low rates of educational attainment and high rates of poverty and unemployment. The funding provided will not replace private philanthropy. Participating communities will need to show a significant local financial commitment to qualify for designation of the Promise Zone.

The zones would allow local communities to capture half the growth in state property tax revenues and use them to supplement the local funds dedicated to making a "Promise" tuition guarantee. The state levies a 6 mill State Education Tax on all property in Michigan. These tax revenues are now committed to the School Aid Fund.

As the Promise Zones create higher property values and greater tax revenues in a community, the zones will capture that growth to continue to fund the Promise. Such zones or tax increment financing (TIF) districts are routinely used to finance development projects both in Michigan and around the nation. It is believed that Michigan's Promise Zones will be the first in the nation to use a tax increment financing mechanism to expand the opportunity for higher education in a community.